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UNCLAS BOGOTA 001855

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SENSITIVE

DEPT FOR INL/LP AND INL/RM
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SNAR SENV KCRM PTER CO

SUBJECT: NAS MONTHLY w5a hectares, with poor weather impeding timely progress toward the annual spray goal. Manual eradication campaign participants eradicated 6,882 hectares of coca, incurring four deaths. The CD Brigade, ports security offices, and various Colombian National Police members captured

important narcotraffickers and seized weapons, illegal drugs, and destroyed drug-making laboratories and equipment. Efforts continued to coordinate USAID and eradication projects. The 19 verification mission for aerial eradication took place from March 24-April 2 in Antioquia, Cordoba, Bolivar, Narino, Cauca, Meta and Guaviare. END SUMMARY.

AERIAL ERADICATION

¶2. (SBU) A total of 8,169 hectares were sprayed during April. Extremely poor weather continued to affect spray production for the month, with both spray packages cancelling 76 percent of their scheduled sorties. During the calendar year, a total of 31,369 hectares of coca have been sprayed through April. Eradication aircraft were involved in one hostile fire incident during April, resulting in zero impacts, bringing the total for the calendar year to seven hostile fire incidents with eight impacts.

¶3. (SBU) Active CD Brigade support in conjunction with PCHP aviation assets helped to ensure zero hostile events and impacts while operating in two regions notorious for historically high numbers of impacts in the past. Spray operations in Tumaco have been carried out while coordinating with the manual eradication effort. Due to unseasonably poor weather, aerial eradication was 1,715 hectares behind the schedule to meet the 100,000 hectare annual spray goal. Aerial eradication remains flexible, adjusting to the weather situation and surging whenever possible to take full advantage of limited windows of good weather.

MANUAL ERADICATION

¶4. (SBU) Phase I of the GOC's 2009 manual eradication campaign (GME program) began in mid-March and will end in mid-May. Total eradication of coca for the month of April was 6,882 hectares - bringing the GME program's year-to-date total to 9,887 hectares. Including eradication carried out by the Colombian security forces, total coca eradication through April was 12,060 hectares. The GOC's 2009 manual eradication goal is 70,000 hectares. Manual eradication operations are ongoing in eight departments with the majority of GMEs in the traditional coca growing regions of Putumayo, Antioquia, Meta and Narino. Due to reduced availability of security personnel to protect GMEs and logistical issues, the pace of manual eradication in 2009 has been slower compared to 2008. In April, landmine and hostile fire incidents killed two security personnel and two eradicators. Through April, 12 people (nine security

personnel and three civilians) have died during this year's manual eradication operations. In all of 2008, 26 security personnel and civilian eradicators were killed in manual eradication operations.

¶ 15. (SBU) Separate from the GME program, the Colombian Army (COLAR) and the Colombian National Police (CNP) conducted manual eradication as part of their normal operations. Through the end of March, COLAR had eradicated 1,499 hectares of coca, 33 hectares of poppy, and one hectare of marijuana; the CNP has eradicated 510 hectares of coca, three hectares of poppy and 22 hectares of marijuana; and the Navy 164 hectares of coca.

COLOMBIA NATIONAL POLICE (CNP)
AIR SERVICE (ARAVI) SUPPORT

¶ 16. (SBU) ARAVI's NAS-supported fleet flew 1,755 mission hours in April. The UH-60 Black Hawks closed out the month with 200 flight hours and an Operational Readiness (OR) rate of 68 percent. The Bell 212 fleet flew 184 mission hours with an OR rate of 60 percent. The Huey II OR rate was 69 percent while flying 868 hours. Two Huey II aircraft, or six percent of the fleet, are currently undergoing depot maintenance for structural repairs. The DC-3 fleet flew 268 hours in April, with an OR rate of 47 percent; one DC-3 is undergoing a 2,000 hour inspection. NAS should receive the last of the C-26 Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance Aerial Platform (ISRAP) PNC 0224s in June 2009.

INTERDICTION

¶ 17. (SBU) The CNP seized 7,132 metric tons of cocaine hydrochloride (HCl) and cocaine base, 42.9 metric tons of marijuana, and 177 kilograms (kgs) of heroin. The CNP also destroyed 14 cocaine HCl labs, 128 coca base labs, and captured 481.4 metric tons of precursor chemicals.

¶ 18. (SBU) Highlights for April included the capture of Daniel "Don Mario" Rendsn Herrera, Colombia's most-wanted narcotrafficker. During April 9-15, tQ1Q9Q2 x Bell 212's, 1 x UH-2, and 1 x C-26 Intelligence Platform). The Junglas initially cordoned off a 15-kilometer square area and by employing SIGINT and HUMINT to focus the search and narrow down the zone, helped to make the capture near Uraba, Antioquia (Northwest Colombia). On April 17, the DIRAN Heroin Group captured three kgs of heroin hidden in a food package mailed from Pasto to Cucuta. On April 18, the new DIRAN Northeast Zone Five destroyed two cocaine HCl laboratories containing 220 kgs of cocaine, 4,037 gallons of liquid and 890 kgs of solid precursors near Cucuta, Norte de Santander. On April 19, the Tuluá Jungla Airmobile Company, accompanied by an informant, captured 97.8 kgs of heroin hidden in a mountaintop cache site in Buesaca, Nariño. On April 25, the Bogota Jungla Airmobile Company (70 Junglas, 3 x UH60s, 1 x C26 Intelligence Platform), in conjunction with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), conducted a well-executed high value target (HVT) operation near Puerto Boyacá in Magdalena Medio against a major narcotrafficker, but without success. The Bogota Junglas conducted follow-on missions in the area, destroying a cocaine HCl laboratory and uncovering a cache site with 12 kgs of cocaine. On April 27, the DIRAN Chemical Group reacting to signal intercepts, captured 1.5 metric tons of precursor chemicals being transported in a truck from Medellín to Norte de Santander. On April 27 - May 2, the Bogota Junglas (30 Junglas, 2 x UH60s) deployed to Mitú, Vaupés to conduct interdiction operations against clandestine airfields near Brazil and Venezuela borders. On April 28, the DIRAN Heroin Control Group captured eight narcotraffickers, six kgs of heroin, and three kgs of cocaine being transported by a go-fast boat from Colombia to San Felipe, Panama. On April 29, the DIRAN Chemical Control Group captured 1.37 metric tons of precursor chemicals being transported in a tractor trailer from Cali to Buenaventura. The Jungla Airmobile companies have been providing 12-man reconnaissance and advisory elements to each of the six Manual Eradication sites managed by DIRAN.

¶ 19. (SBU) Several DIRAN courses were underway at the Rural Antinarcotics Police Training Center in Pijao, Tolima to include

the 23-week Combat Medic Course (40 students), the eight-week Explosives and Demolitions Course (45 students), and the 18-week Jungla International Course (106 students). The Jungla International Course included 57 Colombian students and 49 foreign students from 12 Latin American countries (Haiti, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Belize, Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Costa Rica, Panama, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil). The six-week US Army 7 Special Forces Group's course "Pequenas Unidades" began on April 27 (45 students); this course provides training on reconnaissance, military mountaineering and 60mm mortar.

MARITIME INTERDICTION

¶10. (SBU) In a joint April 15 operation in Buenaventura, DAS (Department of Security Administration in its Spanish acronym) and Colombian Coast Guard inspected a tourist boat and seized 390 packages of cocaine. During a separate operation on the same day, a unit working with the Colombian Coast Guard from Tumaco inspected a 200HP boat and seized 610 gallons of fuel that was going to be used in an HCl laboratory. On April 24, the Colombian Coast Guard from Buenaventura, with air support from Colombian Navy (ARC 802), captured a go-fast with three 200HP motors and seized 1,098 kgs of cocaine, one M16 with 71 rounds, one HF radio, one GPS, one satellite phone; the Coast Guard captured four men.

BASE SECURITY/ROAD INTERDICTION/
NVD PROGRAM

¶11. (SBU) The one-month Base Defense course in San Jose de Guaviare that began on February 18 continued through the month of March and graduated 42 personnel on April 3. The course was conducted at the antinarcotics and included DIRAN personnel from the base, Carabineros from the Guaviare and Vichada Departments, and eight members of the Joaquin Paris battalion of the Colombian Army. In total, the course renovated 10 perimeter wall bunkers that are tied into 2,000 meters of bastion walls.

¶12. (SBU) The Bastion Wall project at San Jose de Guaviare that was completed on January 15 was modified to include the installation of three two-story bunker facilities. The Miraflores project that began at the end of March is two-thirds done.

¶13. (SBU) The operational portion of the Joint/Combined Interagency Operation Firewall which began in March continued throughout April. Colombian participants have included the Military Forces of the Navy, Coast Guard, Marines, Air Force and the Police Forces from the Carabineros, Junglas and DIRAN Aviation. The US participants included the DEA, MILGP, NAS and JIATF-S.

Counter-Drug Brigade

¶14. CD Brigade's Second and Third Battalions continued to support aerial eradication and conducted interdiction and combat operations with operational bases in Tumaco, Nario and Cucuta, Norte de Santander. The First Battalion conducted light infantry and air assault training in Laranidia, Caqueta; the Long Range Reconnaissance Platoon attended and graduated from a survival course in Tabatinga, Brasil. Second and Third Battalions conducted interdiction and combat operations agaQWQM:!g%l of 8,168 hectares during aerial eradication missions; located and destroyed four HCl laboratories, three enemy camps, two enemy caches; seized 21 kgs of coca paste, 6,885 gallons of liquid precursors, 4,275 gallons of solid precursors, 266 kgs of coca leaf being processed, 15 microwaves, seven used to process cocaine, and one generator. During combat operations, the battalions confiscated 17 rifles, eight pistols, two revolvers, 23 hand grenades, two submachine guns, one homemade grenade launcher, and 15 homemade mortar tubes. The battalions killed one and captured 19 narcoterrorists. Three soldiers were wounded during operations.

PORT SECURITY PROGRAM (PSP)

¶16. (SBU) DIRAN's Ports and Airports Area (ARPAE) unit seized 2.5 metric tons of cocaine (net weight) at the Port of Buenaventura; 110 kgs (bulk weight) at the Port of Santa Marta; 10 kgs of marijuana (net weight) at the Port of Cartagena; 10.9 kgs of cocaine (net weight) at the Port of Uraba; 16.4 kgs of cocaine (bulk weight) at the Port of San Andrs; 4.7 kgs of cocaine, 1.3 kgs of heroin and USD 3,000 that were not declared at the airport of Rionegro; 1.1 kgs of cocaine (net weight) at the airport of Cartagena; two kgs of cocaine (net weight) at the airport of Barranquilla; and almost 200 kgs of cocaine (bulk weight), 7.4 kgs of heroin (bulk weight), 59 kgs of marijuana (net weight), 400,000 fake Colombian pesos (approximately USD 190), 2,950 fake euros, USD 36,920 that were not declared, and fabricated USD 10,200 at El Dorado airport in Bogota.

The Canine Units participated in four of the seizures mentioned above, including in the seizure of the 2.5 metric tons of cocaine in Buenaventura.

¶17. (SBU) The DIRAN polygraph unit (that participated in the CNP Standardization Process that NAS/ICE are supporting) conducted polygraph exams on 42 members of the DIRAN's Interdiction, Aviation, and Ports and Airports units and supported the Internal Control Group activities on specific cases. 28 of those examined passed the test and 14 failed.

REESTABLISH POLICE PRESENCE PROGRAM (CARABINEROS)

¶18. (SBU) In light of complaints from the Departmental commanders on the decline in security when units pull out to support other missions or train, the Carabineros Directorate (DICAR) began a complete review of the utilization of squadrons to find ways to accomplish special missions and still maintain security in the departments.

¶19. (SBU) There is presently only one search block operating with direct DICAR involvement, located in the Cordoba/Antioquia area. Responsibility for the other search blocks has been turned over to either the departmental or regional commanders to ensure flexibility and rapid response to emerging challenges.

¶20. (SBU) In April, the Carabineros captured 145 people (one FARC/ELN, seven Emerging Criminal Bands, and 137 common criminals); seized 111 weapons, 1,558 gallons of liquid precursors, 23,352 kgs of solid precursors, 160 kgs of cocaine and cocaine base, 340 kgs of marijuana, and 18 fragmentation grenades. The squadrons deactivated eight improvised explosive devices; destroyed 22 labs and five seedbeds; captured three caches and destroyed five camps. Not counting the manual eradication teams, the squadrons eradicated 67 hectares of coca during normal operations.

ENVIRONMENTAL

¶21. (SBU) In April, the interagency complaints committee received three new claims of alleged spray damage to legal crops and 113 cases were closed. NAS Bogota concluded payment to 13 complainants to total approximately USD 59,365; and started payments for 11 people in Putumayo that will total approximately USD 12,237. As of April 30, we have compensated 130 complainants totaling approximately USD 561,026.

¶22. (SBU) The 19 verification mission for aerial eradication took place from March 24-April 2 in Antioquia, Cordoba, Bolivar, Narino, Cauca, Meta and Guaviare. Due to the security situation near Putumayo and Caqueta we were unable to complete the mission, however NAS has rescheduled this portion for May 13-15.

BROWNFIELD